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the new family movement

A PATH TOWARD GREATER UNITY WITHIN THE FAMILY AND AMONG FAMILIES. PAGE 2

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2 *THE NEW FAMILY MOVEMENT: A series of articles dealing with different aspects of family life as seen from the point of view of the New Families of the Focolare.*

5 *TWO BECOME ONE FLESH: When the two individuals who make up a couple give God the first place in their lives, and base their marriage on this choice, their love for each other acquires a new dimension.*

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19 *AT VALAMO WITH 'SYNDESMOS': Syndesmos is a Greek word meaning "bond." This world-wide association of Orthodox youth organizations held an International Orthodox Youth Festival and its Tenth General Assembly this past summer in Valamo, Finland.*

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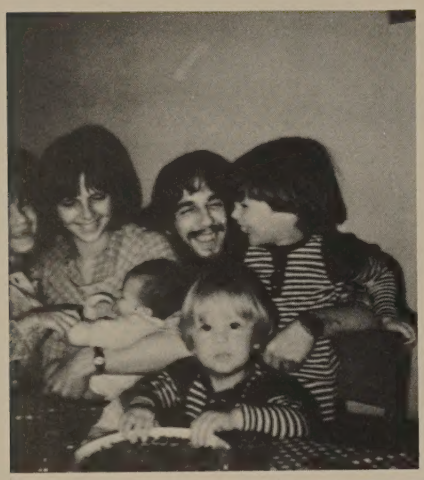
Pope John Paul II recently said that in the future this century will be known as "the century of the family." This could seem surprising if we think that in the past 100 years everything has been done to undermine and destroy the institution of the family. Instead it continues to demonstrate its vitality more than ever, even in situations that are anything but conducive to its life. The "New Family Movement" of the Focolare Movement shares in this optimistic outlook and wants to give its contribution so that the family may re-attain its rightful place in society.

THE NEW FAMILY MOVEMENT



Weakened family life is one of the greatest social ills of our time. The "New Family" Movement has as its aim to bring the Focolare spirit of unity into family life, so that each family will be deeply united within itself and with other families.

Compiled by MARIELE AND PINO QUARTANA and ANNA MARIA AND DANILO ZANZUCCHI

JULY 16, 1967

Chiara Lubich and a group of married focolarini from all over the world met at the Mariapolis Center of Rocca di Papa. Chiara told them, "This morning at the general audience the Holy Father said that today, after the Council, Christianity is not itself if it is not explosive, apostolic and expansive. From what I'm going to tell you this evening, it is something explosive, apostolic and expansive that is going to come forth."

It was in this way that the "New Family Movement" was born in the very heart of the Focolare Movement.

What is its goal? It was Chiara herself who outlined it that same day that she founded it: "To stress the value of the great sacrament of matrimony, and to see that it bears the greatest possible fruit.

"How can this be accomplished? First of all, by trying to make of your family life an experience that you can then share with others. It is necessary that you live well in your families and make of your life something that you can give to others."

The spirituality of the Focolare, which focuses on unity, the unity that Jesus asked of the Father before dying for all of humanity, on mutual love, and on the love of the cross, would enlighten and animate the experiences of the families who lived it. What spirituality could be better suited to help couples live well and in a profound way their marriage which makes of two individuals, "one flesh,"[1] and which is based on the reciprocal love between a man and a woman? "I believe," Chiara affirmed on another occasion, "that the charism of the ideal of unity, engrafted on the sacred institution of matrimony, gives as a result such a masterpiece, which is perhaps difficult to comprehend."

The beginning of the Focolare Movement was marked by a choice — that of following Christ

UNITY: A DIVINE WORD

Unity: a divine word. If, at a certain moment, this word were uttered by the Omnipotent, and all people lived and applied it in various ways . . . . we would see the world suddenly come to a halt – like a film switched on to reverse – and then start moving rapidly in the opposite direction . . . .

Families previously torn apart by quarrels, frozen by mutual incomprehension and hatred, deadened by divorce, would be re-united; children would enter this world and grow in a climate of human and divine love; new individuals would be forged for a more Christian future . . . .

Factories and workshops, often the gathering places of people who are "slaves" to their jobs, and who are obliged to work in an atmosphere of emptiness and boredom – if not of downright opposition to God – would become places of peace, where each person does his part for the good of all. The teaching imparted in schools would go beyond the limits of science; every form of knowledge would serve as a footstool to the contemplation of eternal truths; and contact with short formulae, simple laws, even numbers, would lead the child at the school desk to the daily intuition and unveiling of new mysteries.

Parliaments would become the meeting places of people who, putting aside all deceit toward other persons, or other countries, would be more concerned about the common good than about each one's individual task.

The world would be a better place; heaven would seem to descend, like a dream come true, upon the earth, and the harmony of creation would offer a frame, a background, to the concord of everyone's hearts.

Is this a dream? It may seem like a dream! Yet it is this You asked for when You prayed: "Thy will be done on earth as it is in Heaven."

The members of the Focolare Movement are called to live this word, to be unity made flesh in order to communicate this unity to the world through their lives, example and words.

Chiara Lubich

in the greatest of his sufferings, when he cried out on the cross, "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" (Matt. 27:46). Those who belonged to it learned how to see an aspect of his suffering in every suffering, whether it was they who had encountered it or someone else.

Chiara Lubich recalled this fact when she announced the birth of the "New Family Movement," and told the married focolarini that because of the love for Jesus crucified and forsaken they would have to reach out to those who were most similar to him. It was in this way that she entrusted to the families of the Movement, especially those families that were divided, experiencing the trauma of divorce, of separation, and then orphans, children from broken homes, widows and widowers, all those who were lonely, outcasts, etc.

This is how she concluded her talk on that historical day of July 1967. "Imagine if you had Jesus here in front of you now, Jesus looking at the world, at the crowds and experiencing pity on them. Considering all of humanity (almost everyone gets married), I'm asking you to reach out especially to those families who are most shattered, those who are most similar to Jesus Forsaken. But you have to act as if it were Jesus who looks at the crowds of today through your eyes and act consequently . . . so that this pity may not remain only a sentiment

Chiara Lubich, during a stay at Loppiano a few years ago, visited the complex of houses where some families of the movement live.

Some members of the families that live at Loppiano, a small international city of the Focolare Movement located near Florence, Italy. Families have always been active in the movement from its beginning in 1943, but it was in 1967 that a particular movement, the New Families was founded.

fully appreciating the sacrament

If the family were to realize
the true value of its sacrament,
and take full advantage of it,
that is to say, if, besides carrying
out its tasks of generating new life,
of working, of living through
sickness and health,
joys and sorrows,
it were to live also its
sacramental function,
as a transmitter of divine life,
as well as physical life
like a reproduction of the
house of Nazareth,
in such a way that the father is
Christ,
the mother the Church
and the child Christ-Church;
if it were to remain in the world
as a reminder of the Eternal,
as an image of the Church
that gives Christ to the world,
and makes of its life together
a participation in the trinitarian
life in heaven,
accomplishing the unity of the
three (father, mother and child
becoming one heart and one soul),
then its time on earth would be
like a repetition of Calvary –
that is, it would bring about
redemption and resurrection.

Igino Giordani

Excerpt taken from Diary of Fire (Rome: Citta Nuova, 1980).

(continued from page 3)

but be transformed into action, into projects that will then come with us in Heaven . . . "

Today, 13 years later, the New Family Movement has spread to more than 120 nations throughout the world.

The following eleven pages will deal with various aspects of family life, from engagement to education in the family, from responsible parenthood to the frequent lack of contact between generations. The New Families share their ideas on these and other topics, ideas which are the fruit of the experiences they have lived in the past years, doing as Chiara invited them to do at the beginning of the movement.

1) Genesis 2:24.

TWO BECOME ONE FLESH

In order to speak of Christian life in a family, it is necessary to start with the individuals that make up the couple, that is to say with "him" and with "her." God is love and he loves each one in a personal and exclusive way. It is in discovering this love that human beings desire to respond to it the best they can. It is this discovery which leads many to the understanding that God must be given the first place in their lives, that the relationship with him, is the most important one, and that all others have to be engrafted on this one, from which they acquire their true meaning.

A woman once told us: "I was deeply in love with my husband and firmly convinced that my life would have no meaning without him. Since he developed a slight heart ailment, I lived in the constant fear of losing him. This anxiety, I realized only later, was eroding our relationship, making of me a prisoner of fear and suffocating my husband.

"It was a more Christian vision of life that gave me the balance I needed. I abandoned myself to God, trusted in his love for me and my husband, our family, and our life changed completely. I began to experience what it means to be free."

This is true. We read in Sacred Scriptures, "This is why a man leaves his father and mother and clings to his wife, and the two of them become one flesh" (Gen. 2:24). It is written in Mark, "Therefore let no man separate what God has joined." An unfathomable mystery lies at the basis of the relationship between a man and a woman in marriage.

There are also other passages which speak of this relationship: "Do you think I have come to establish peace on the earth? I assure you, the contrary is true; I have come for division" (Lk. 12:51); Jesus lists a series of family relationships that he says he has come to overturn. It is written: "If anyone comes to me without turning his back on his father and mother, his wife and children, his brothers and sisters, indeed his very self, he cannot be my follower" (Lk. 14:26). Jesus was speaking to everyone, not just to a selected group of people. Lay people, married couples especially, run the risk to consider themselves "second-class Christians" if they don't understand this. Also their love has to be great and pure, an image of God's very love. This love entails "turning one's back" (it is a spiritual act) in order to love in a more intense way; "to be detached," in order to be free to really give of oneself in a totally disinterested way.

Many couples who want to live according to the spirituality of the movement told us what a revolution has been brought about in their lives by their personal choice of God. This choice places them, so to say, before God as "individuals," and is what fulfills them completely. It is this personal choice of God made by each one that unites the couple in a way that, if their relationship was already a good one, it becomes more mature; if it was a difficult one, it acquires patience and endurance, leading to the discovery of one another. More over they learn how to love and appreciate each other in a deeper way.

It is only after all this has happened that it is possible to remind the couple of the commandment that Jesus gave to all people of every century and state of life: "Love one another as I have loved you" (John 15:12).

A young wife was telling one of us recently: "I don't know why, but I never liked to hear people, sometimes even priests, speak of how a man and a woman complete one another in marriage. I instinctively reacted against this and always felt the need to defend myself. What I could not accept was the idea of being incomplete and in need of someone else in order to become a fulfilled individual. I always felt that I was meant to be married, but marriage meant something else to me. Let me explain. I think that without knowing it, deep down, I was seeking to find

Rosanna and Paul: meeting families that try to live the Gospel, they understood that they had to change their lives completely. After a separation, that was on the brink of becoming permanent because of many misunderstandings, they came back together again. Today, together with their son Fredrick, they are witnesses to the joy that comes from having discovered mutual love and put it into practice.

with my husband a real communion. I could not use him as a leaning-post, or worse, as a means to become a complete human being."

The sincere effort to live the new commandment of Jesus makes it possible to have him present among us as he himself promised. ("Where two or three are gathered in my name there am I in the midst of them" Matt. 18:20.) Logically this possibility exists also in a family, even in the humdrum routine of everyday life. This presence is definitely overwhelming and vivifying. Every member of the family has the great responsibility of contributing to build this reality, with equal dignity. The different roles which exist because someone is husband or wife, mother or father, grandmother or grandfather, are secondary.

Here we would like to insert verbatim a few lines written by Silvester Noche, from Africa. He works at the airport of Duala, in the Cameroons. His wife is Jacinte and they have four children. "In Africa, men are the head of the household. They make all the decisions alone. The only thing women do is obey in all situations. At the most, they may be allowed to plead with their husbands, but only about a specific situation.

"When we first got married, I asked myself how I could live Christianity in my family, without destroying completely our traditions. Then we met the New Families, and we understood that in a Christian family Jesus is the head. Even though I remained in a certain way responsible for our family, I understood that I couldn't for example, keep secrets from my wife. We had to do things together. This changed the management of our family completely, even though externally everything appeared as before."

This is what we wanted to emphasize: When Christ becomes the center of a family, he makes all members equal.

But what is the love that these two individuals who have chosen God personally should have for each other in order for the couple to reach real unity? This love was already described two thousand years ago: "There is no greater love than this: to lay down one's life for one's friends" (John 15:13).

The couple at the center is Silvester and Jacinte Noche from the Cameroons, together with two other couples from their country who also belong to the New Families. The picture was taken during a meeting at Rocca di Papa.

A young couple of the New Family Movement told us during an interview: "We started out our life together basing it on what we could expect from the other. Far from us the idea of giving our life! Our life? We were not even ready to give up an idea, a project, a small wish. We were not ready to give up anything. At least now we know where to start."

And this beginning often leads to a deeper dialogue between the two. The couple finds new ways to express their love for each other, and they begin to direct more attention to the needs of the other, rather than being concentrated primarily on themselves.

A man in his thirties who had been married only a short time, told us recently, "My wife and I got along pretty well together, we always understood each other. However, coming into contact with families who are trying to live their marriage in an authentically Christian way, we've realized all of a sudden that we never told each other the deeper, more profound things, what was really going on inside of us. I guess our understanding of each other was pretty superficial. Now, many times, I find myself doing the same things for my wife that I used to do, but in a different way. My attitude has changed."

Comments like these are heard frequently at the meetings of the New Family Movement. Couples discover that their love is not something static, but that it must be renewed continually.

Perhaps we should mention here something about responsible parenthood, which seems to be a big issue in the life of many couples.

How is this problem handled when seen from the point of view of love? When there is love the decision to space the birth of children, or to wait, is made only if it is for the good of the entire family and its individual members. It is in the framework of real love that is based first of all on a spiritual communion that the true value of abstinence is discovered. If it is true that love is nourished by the conjugal relationship, it is also true that love becomes deeper when periodic continence is practiced out of love. Therefore, it is only when couples open up to an authentic love interested in the good of others, that they want to know the methods based on periodic continence. because they see it as an expression of love. When they enter the dimension of authentic love, they realize that this is the method which most respects the dignity of the individuals, and most enriches the relationship between them. They understand that it is more than a method, it is a way of life, certainly a Christian way of life, one which is at the same time profoundly human and humanizing.

This has been the experience, thirteen years after the Encylical "Humanae Vitae," of couples from many countries all over the world with whom the New Family Movement is in contact, and who have started to live in the way it proposes. ●

ENGAGEMENT: NOT A PASSAGE, BUT A STEP TO BUILD ON

During a recent gathering for engaged couples held in Rome by the New Families, a young man, who called himself a Marxist, told the organizers: "I don't believe in God but I know that what you call love is love."

What was it? It was love based on a personal choice of God, on charity.

Obviously, it had not been possible at the beginning of this three-day-long meeting to talk openly about the choice of God. Those participating were of different backgrounds and ideologies. They had come to test out their ideas on one another and on more mature couples, who, at the most, could offer the experience of their life, very simply, without imposing anything on the younger couples.

The topic was, therefore, love—everyone wanted to talk and hear about this.

It is a fact that all people, especially the young, have in common a desire for happiness. Also this time, as in many other occasions, this common ground helped us to arrive at some conclusions in the end. We felt that the best way to describe love was through the testimony of couples who had already experienced its fruits: joy, peace, serenity in the face of difficulties, unity, openness to new life, availability for the others. This would make their love credible and help the young to overcome a certain mistrust which they often have towards adults.

Moreover, when young people are in the company of others who do love one another they come to a greater appreciation of their own love and attraction and to a real eagerness to listen and exchange ideas.

The dialogue which follows goes from the difficulties we all experience in trying to love one another as we would want to, to the prerequisites that make love real and the elements which would ultimately destroy it.

And among the prerequisites for the love all wish to reach we see the ability to listen, to let the other fully express him or herself, to accept his or her shortcomings. Love wants to understand, to share. Love can never be demanding, or look for someone to lean on or possess; it cannot be deceitful; it does not seek false self-fulfillment. The conclusion is that the love which everyone aspires to has those characteristics that St. Paul attributes to charity: always ready to trust, to hope and to endure whatever comes . . . .

It is at this point that in many gatherings most of the young people begin to make a comparison between the relationship they already have with each other and the one they are beginning to catch a glimpse of. They realize that a change is necessary and they want to make it, finding great help also in the experience of other young people who are trying to do it.

It has happened that some couples who believed in pre-marital sex, decided to re-examine and change their relationship. Why? Because now they saw it in another, wider perspective, where their dialogue on a sexual level, which they had considered the only one, or at least, the predominant one, could be at this time in their lives, an obstacle to the achievement of a relationship between the two where all the nuances of love are fully understood. Within this broader concept, the physical relationship takes its rightful place, and every outward expression of their love for each other acquires a new value. It becomes logical to consider physical union as a point of arrival in a maturation process.

The final outcome of these gatherings for engaged couples is usually the same. Also young people who tried to live as Christians, through the exchange of experiences of life, discover the depth of love to which they are called. They see that a Christian life contains an element of sacrifice, that there is no real love without self-denial. Those, instead, who were indifferent towards the faith, or non-believers, by trying to love in this way, frequently discover God-Love and thus find, or find again, faith in him. ●

A meeting of Gen who are engaged to be married. When the young people of the Focolare Movement feel called to marriage, they begin to prepare themselves, keeping in mind their decision to go "against the current." They are eager to learn the teachings of the Church and to hear the experiences of the married people in the Movement. By living the period of engagement according to the principles given in the Gospel and through the Church, these couples are a concrete example for many other young people.

Parents share the fruit of their experience as educators of their children

LOVE: THE BEST ENVIRONMENT FOR GROWTH

"I would never have thought that it would be so difficult to raise my children. My son and daughter, who are only 12 and 10 years old, are already trying to impose their own ideas on me. They feel caged-in if we don't let them watch everything they want to see on television. They act like they're being persecuted if they can't go out to play with their friends every day, or invite all of them over to our house. If we don't give them money to buy the comic books they want it's the same story . . . In addition, so many of the people I know who have grown children are having tremendous problems with them. I'm scared to death to see my own children grow up. Yet deep down they're good, sensitive kids who want to stay close to their father and mother. My wife and I look each other in the eye and ask ourselves: 'Where did we go wrong? Which way should we turn?' We are vacillating between sternness and indulgence, between punishments and rewards, with no success . . . "

It is not necessarily true that children have to receive a complete religious education from their parents. This aspect can also be taken care of in the parish, by priests, sisters or catechists. However, it is within the family that children acquire their basic outlook on life. It is important, therefore, that they learn to see that the love of God for them is expressed through every event or circumstance in life be it joyful or sorrowful. The "New Families" benefit greatly from the practice of living the word of life, which helps them to create the atmosphere necessary for this learning.

These are the words of one of my neighbors, but they seem to express the state of mind of many other parents as well. It is certainly true that the world has changed in only a few years. Gone is the time when the basis of a Christian upbringing corresponded to the values being passed on by the society in which the family lived. (Here we are speaking primarily of the Western world.) Gone, too, is the time when children sensed a continuity between what they heard at home and elsewhere — in school, in the parish, and in their dealings with all adults. Then, the parents' task was made much easier by the fact that their children found the values they had been taught at home confirmed to a certain extent, in the society at large.

We are well aware that this is no longer the case, but we will not analyze here the causes for this. Rather, we would like to share the fruit of the experience of many parents, as it was lived in these past years. All together we have started to confront ourselves with our responsibility as educators of our children, and to see if the elements needed for a Christian upbringing were at the basis of our family life.

Several couples in the New Family Movement told us during one of their conventions, "We understood our task as parents somewhat better when both as individuals and as a couple we began to

The best foundation for good sex education is a harmonious relationship between the parents, renewed continually through difficulties and self-sacrifice. Next, it is necessary for both parents to make sure that they maintain an open relationship with each child. No book or pamphlet can be helpful to them if this rapport is missing. Otherwise, sex education is reduced to "instruction," where the true understanding of the dynamics of love, of the relationship between a man and a woman, of the very origin of life, remains distorted, limited to a purely "materialistic" vision of things.

fulfill more completely the obligations which we have in the eyes of God." Another father had this to say, "At a certain point, I realized that my son absorbed not so much my words - which, at times, he couldn't even understand — as the way I acted. I noticed that he picked up my moods. For example, when I was at peace with myself and with those around me, he absorbed this peace; in the same way, he reflected my negative feelings. When I became convinced of this, I felt that I had to deeply examine my life and the principles which shape it."

This renewed personal commitment helps to look more closely at the primary, which is at the same time the ultimate goal of a truly Christian upbringing. The Church's teachings in this regard have been of prime importance to the New Families. They are summed up well in these words of Pope Paul VI: " 'Free and responsible collaborators with the Creator; Christian spouses thereby see their bodily fertility acquire a new nobility. The impulse which prompts them to unite with each other is a bearer of life, and it permits God to give himself children. Having become father and mother, the spouses discover with wonder at the baptismal font, that their child is henceforth a child of God, 'born again of water and the Spirit,' and that he has been entrusted to them so that they watch over not only his physical and moral growth, but also over the budding and flowering in him of the 'new man.' "*1*

This, then, must be the starting point of every child-rearing process: to see that the gifts which God infuses in the baby's soul at Baptism, the gifts of the Holy Spirit, are lived and brought to fulfillment. And the first step in doing this is to create an environment favorable to the development of this seed; to prepare the fertile ground that will allow this young plant to grow. This fertile ground is love — first of all, the love between father and mother. Particularly during the first few years of life, children are very receptive to the atmosphere around them and sense very clearly the relationship existing between their parents. During this period of time, when the baby is entrusted almost exclusively to their care, the parents have this great opportunity which at the same time entails an enormous responsibility. Therefore, in order to create a suitable environment for raising their child, Christian parents must establish a relationship with one another, even before considering their relationship with their child (although it isn't really a question of before and after).

We have seen that the couples who are active in the New Family Movement attempt to form this relationship of mutual love before all else; and in so doing, they lay the foundation for raising their children in the best way possible. There is a great deal of talk nowadays about different levels of education — religious, social, sexual, etc. — and when confronted with all of these, parents often don't know where to begin. But if they begin with charity — mutual charity and charity for the children God has entrusted to them — they possess the element which unifies the whole.

Our experience has shown us that on this basis the spiritual gifts the child receives through the grace of Baptism, and also his or her natural talents, are nourished and develop harmoniously. Children immediately begin to establish relationships with everything around them in a way that blends in well with the family's own lifestyle. They learn to view all created persons and things with that "pure heart" of which Jesus speaks and to which Pope John Paul II often refers: in other words, with the attitude of a human being whom God has placed at the center of the universe, not so that he can possess or misuse it, but rather, so that he may make it an object of contemplation and love. We have seen that the root of children's total upbringing, the element which

unifies all the aspects of the educational process, lies in the way in which they regard people and things, an attitude which the very life of their parents instills in them.

This attitude, which we could call one of "purity in conduct and intention," contains the root of one's own freedom and that of others. It offers the possibility of enjoying people and things without being enslaved by them, of engaging in relationships which do not tend to "use" others, but to establish a real exchange, a communion. The child's personality develops through these relationships, setting in motion his creativity, his intelligence, sensitivity and imagination. . . . His personality is not crushed; it grows. This striving towards a communion, which entails self-denial, going against the natural tendency towards selfishness, becomes always more an attitude of giving, it becomes charity, love.

On this foundation, the parents' educative responsibility for their children is gradually carried out. "Now we know what we have to do," some parents told us. "We should not try to mold our children in our own image and likeness, or project a future for them according to our own taste and ideas; but rather, help them fulfill God's mysterious plan for them. We are trying to reach this goal, respecting the personality and freedom of our children; and we are more aware, too, of our responsibility to stay close by them every day through vigilant love.

"Our effort to love in a supernatural way does not diminish our affection, but it does cleanse it of our egotism. And we have noticed that the more we are able to love in a pure and selfless way, the more we know when and how to act where our children's upbringing is concerned. We are able to discern when to keep quiet and when to speak, when it is the moment to intervene, perhaps to exercise our authority. We try to have the kind of love that knows how to be patient, tries to understand, and doesn't rush things. And we don't feel that patience, understanding, and forbearance are signs of weakness or permissiveness. They are virtues, and as such they give strength and serenity; they inspire respect."

It is evident that this process of child rearing does not follow an unswerving course; nor is it free from setbacks. This is because the ever-present consequences of original sin, and our social environment too, tend to encourage selfishness rather than love. Precisely because of this, even children raised in this way, may, as they grow older, go through periods of crisis that are sometimes long and difficult. We have seen some children of many couples reach the inevitable moment in which they need to examine their lives and make their own personal choice of God. We have seen others reach the point of questioning all Christian values. Still others, influenced by the widespread secularism and materialism, and fascinated by the offer of an easy-to-come-by happiness, get mixed up and run the risk of getting involved in dangerous experiences which are, at times, even damaging.

We have seen
that the root
of children's total upbringing,
the element
which unifies
all the aspects
of the educational process,
lies in the way in which
they regard
people and things,
an attitude
which the very life
of their parents
instills in them.

All together we parents have been able to note one thing. It seems that along with everything that these children have received from their fathers and mothers in a material way, they have absorbed a very particular characteristic which distinguishes them from others. They seem unable to conceive of any type of relationship other than that proposed in the Gospel. In fact, they have acquired an ability to make room in their lives for others, to listen to them, and share their sufferings, pursuits, and joys. This quality makes them well-liked by all whom they meet.

In our opinion, when parents have succeeded in this, they can have great hope for them. The hope is that any kind of love that is not free from selfishness, a love that is not based on the Gospel, should in the end disappoint them and lead them to be thirsty again for something absolute, causing them to turn to Christ for the answer.

The son of friends of ours told us, "while politically involved in a violent, merciless, godless struggle for justice, equality and peace, the only thing I could hold on to in the face of each defeat, every doubt, and disillusionment, was the strong and secure relationship that existed between my father and mother, that way of loving each other and others that they had passed on to us from the time we were children."

In any event, "And if it happens that the adolescent closes himself to the educative work of his parents," (these are once again the words of Pope Paul VI) "then they, in their own flesh, participate sorrowfully in Christ's suffering from man's rejection."[2]

The New Families of the Movement are families of our times, immersed in the same realities faced by every person. They don't live in an ivory tower; they aren't immune to, or preserved from, the afflictions that plague the rest of mankind. Nor would they want to be.

In conclusion, we would simply add that not all the crises or difficulties that children go through can be blamed only on them or on the society. At times, these crises are actually caused by the mistakes we parents have made in raising our children. But even here, we have learned to recognize the value of this suffering which, like all other forms of suffering, is destined to bear fruit. ●

1) Pope Paul VI, "Christian Witness in Married Life," to the Teams of Our Lady, May 4, 1970. Translation from "The Pope Speaks," Vol. 15, 1970, pp. 119-120.

2) Ibid.

The Zanzucchi family with brothers, sisters, in-laws, aunts, uncles, nieces, nephews, cousins and grandparents. Anna Maria and Danilo told us: "During summer vacation we go back to being a 'patriarchal' family. Being together in this way is very beneficial. Both we and the children feel that each one gives a particular contribution and the time spent together is an enrichment for all." Here we see them watching some home movies from previous vacations.

AN ANTIDOTE TO THE GENERATION GAP

"As soon as I began to love my wife and children with the love which is spoken of in the Gospel, I understood that my in-laws . . . ."

"When, through contact with other families, I understood more clearly what it means to live a Christian life, in the family as well as elsewhere, I realized that my relationship with my sister-in-law who lives with us was not . . . ."

These are fragments of talks, parts of real experiences — very often painful ones — that have been heard over and over again in the course of many gatherings.

Does this mean that we go beyond the nuclear family and slowly, with great effort, try to return to the extended family which seems to have completely disappeared, at least in the Western world? No, we are talking about something else.

We like to dream. And dreams at time can become a reality. We are speaking of a family in which all values are summed up to form a completely new pattern of living; a family that gathers together what is best of the past, of the present, and . . . of the future. We are speaking of a situation where the power of love declares obsolete all that should go, giving life to what should bloom and hasn't come yet.

"In our country it is the family that arranges marriages," a Korean couple told us. "Even today, it's not unusual for spouses to meet each other for the first time only on their wedding day. We are Christians, and we chose each other because of our love. We felt that Jesus himself had given us this freedom. We had understood, in fact, that our love was a gift from God, given to start a new family. This didn't scandalize those around us, however, because little by little, and with great patience, we were able to help our relatives understand us. And we became a part of the family unit with almost no difficulty. Or better, the difficulties, when we accepted them, helped our relationships with the others to mature and deepen. We feel that we have given, and are continuing to give, our little contribution of unity and freedom to the whole family."

Silvester Noche told us, "In Africa, by 'family' we mean everyone who is in any way related to us: besides father, mother, and children, there are the grandparents, in-laws, uncles and aunts, nieces and nephews,and cousins. Now hospitality is a characteristic of the African family. Therefore, there are very often numerous members of a given family living under one roof. In our cities, however, the high cost of living and educating our children, and desire to live a more modern way of life are forcing many to reduce the size of the family unit, even though this goes against our traditions.

"We were also faced with the same situation and the consequent problem of how to tell certain members of our family that they couldn't live with us any longer. It was just then that the word of life for that month arrived. It was: "He had loved his own in the world, and would show his love for them to the end.' (Jn. 13:1) We asked ourselves, then, what we should do. If we had loved these relatives up to that point, why not love

Drawing nearer to the goal

These weary steps,
in the sun and under the rain,
on the way back home,
are the homeward march
to your house, Father.
Just as this toil,
these concerns and duties
and worries of all kinds,
all day long,
and sickness and physical
exhaustion through which
the body wears out,
are the decay of matter
in order to reach your kingdom,
Son.
And all these sufferings are
our collaboration in your sacrifice
on the cross;
they become drops of blood,
of your blood.
You give them value and join them
to the fruit of your sacrifice.
And this yearning to return,
this hunger for what is divine,
this striving toward sanctity,
is a sharing in your gifts,
Holy Spirit.
And so, whether I am on a
streetcar, or in the office,
or in the street,
I am drawn into your life,
Blessed Trinity:
You carry me within you.
I carry you within me.
And as I draw nearer
to physical death I grow in You,
going up through the passes
of the mystical ascent.
In this way, this boring and
unvarying and sad thing which
is life in old age becomes
a youthful liberation,
a spreading of wings
in order to leap into Eternity
in the midst of your sun,
uncreated Trinity,
near Mary and the saints,
near Paul, Augustine, Francis,
Clare, Catherine, and Theresa . . .
near the exulting joy of souls
who will not die.

Igino Giordani

Excerpt taken from Diary of Fire (Rome: Citta Nuova, 1980).

them to the end? And so we decided to keep them with us.

"But the problem remained, because these people lived and ate at our expense without ever helping with the housework. This made things very hard for both me and my wife. For instance, when I returned home from work I would always find all the garbage piled up outside the kitchen door. Almost instinctively, I would then judge the people at home and say to myself, 'Couldn't they at least take out the garbage?'

But again the word of life would come to my aid. In fact, the commentary on that passage of the Gospel contained this sentence: 'How many times have you started to take care of people and then abandoned them, using every possible excuse to silence your conscience? How many things have you started with enthusiasm and then stopped, because of difficulties you felt were beyond your strength?'

"I understood that loving my relatives 'to the end' meant not sending them away but, rather, being an example for them. And so when I got home in the evening and found the garbage there, I emptied it, washed out the pail, and put it back where it belonged — with the determination of one who is ready to do it forever. I did it once, twice, three times . . . but after that I always found that someone else had done it before I arrived. This happened with many other things as well.

"Now some time has passed, and I can say that our family has become a real community where each person tries to love and to help the others."

In other words we are speaking of patriarchal societies changing their life style and nuclear families becoming families in which three generations come together again. They don't necessarily have to live under the same roof; this depends on the people involved, on their particular situation and circumstances. But there is a deep "togetherness," created by new bonds of love based on the Gospel. In this framework the elderly give an essential contribution, even when they are forced to depend on others because of their poor health.

In the elderly, in their very "presence," there is the synthesis of a whole life. Family members discover this if they are vigilant in love, notwithstanding the physical, mental and psychological deterioration they see, and all the problems and fatigue that the situation may entail. Looking at things from the point of view of love, they are able to see reality from God's angle. The elderly person, Chiara Lubich wrote in one of her meditations, is like ". . . the grain of wheat that is slowly dying and is about to rise to a new, different life, 'in new heavens.' I think that God sees things in this way. The final approach to heaven is far more attractive than the various stages of the long road of life, which in the end, only serves to open that one door."[1]

In the past, however, in the patriarchal family, esteem and respect for the elderly were sometimes mixed with many other elements. Very often, for instance, the older persons had great expertise in their fields of endeavor, they were the ones who taught and gave suggestions on how to do things, and were the careful administrators of the family finances, and frequently, also the owners of everything. Therefore, self-interest also played a part in the family's relationship with the elderly.

Today, instead, in order for families to be renewed without being negatively influenced either by the past or by their social and cultural environment, and without reacting against and losing values that are everlasting, they must let their relationships be "upset" by the law of the Gospel, and establish a bond with everyone on the level of supernatural love.

If they do this, something interesting happens:the appreciation of the elderly's contribution, the vital contact among grandparents, parents and children coming closer together in a bond of love and charity, purified and deepened by sufferings and difficulties, serve within the family to bridge the generation gap, which is terribly harmful since no one can uproot himself from history. ●

1) Chiara Lubich, Meditations, (New York: New City Press, 1974), p. 131.

MORE UNITED MEANS MORE OPEN

At the time of the last Synod a journalist who was interviewing several people belonging to different family movements asked us: "How do you people in the New Family Movement find a balance between life within the family and life outside of it?"

The answer, based on the experience of these past thirteen years, is very simple. The families in the Movement, precisely because of their own renewal are fully aware that each family unit, like each person, has a unique and irreplaceable value and as such, must have its own particular countenance. Moreover, they believe that God has a precise and special plan for each family, and so accordingly, they nourish and safeguard the privacy of their own families in order to help them to flourish in the very way that God has planned for them.

Each family unit, like each person, has a unique and irreplaceable value and as such must have its own particular countenance. The New Families believe, moreover, that God has a precise and special plan for each family, and so accordingly, they nourish and safeguard the privacy of their own families in order to help them to flourish in the very way that God has planned for them.

At the same time, however, it must be said that by its very nature love is expansive. If we look at Mary, we see that she gave life to Jesus and gave him to the world. When the family repeats (in a certain sense) this divine act of generating Christ through the mutual love of its members, it cannot keep this love to itself, closing it up within four walls. Rather, the family feels called to carry it out into the world.

Families who do this become a reference point for others, a visible model almost, and groups of other families form around them, who establish a relationship of mutual love with one another. They help one another, share their experiences as well as material possessions, etc. In this climate of brotherhood, no family has any authority over the others. This is only logical. Each couple is bound together by the Sacrament of Matrimony and by the love between them. And it is in these two sources that they find all they need to guide their families.

"Well then," one might ask, "what is the point of sharing experiences with other families?" The point is that knowing the road that someone else has traveled can be helpful and constructive for others as well. This is our only purpose in sharing them.

It is certainly true that these groups of families have a special impact on the world around them. We are reminded of Jesus' priestly prayer to his Father: " . . . may they be one in us, as you are in me and I am in you, so that the world may believe it was you who sent me" (Jn. 18:21). In fact, many have discovered or rediscovered faith in God-love in meeting people who love one another.

They love, help and support one another. But someone might ask: "What is this, a private club?" "An elite group, as they say?" No, not at all!

One point we mentioned earlier holds true also here: charity is expansive; Charity present among those who love, is for everyone. In a special way, as we said in the introduction to these articles, this love reaches out to the lonely, to the outcast, to those who suffer most . . . in other words, "to those who most represent the figure of Jesus crucified and forsaken."

Programs which we made at the beginning of the New Family Movement, are now fully realized, for many are the families who understand that the cry of abandonment of Jesus is being repeated

A LIVING CELL

"Today Christian families, too — perhaps more so than in former ages — ought to feel themselves to be living cells of the Church. If fathers and mothers, husbands, wives and children, elevate their natural love to a supernatural level from moment to moment, seeing one another as brothers and sisters in Christ, loving each other as Jesus has commanded us to do, then Christ cannot but fulfill His promise to be present among those who are united in His Name."[1]

"The presence within the family of other members, such as grandparents and aunts and uncles, who partake of the family's supernatural warmth, makes the small world of the family even more attractive. Because it is united, the family can be open to everyone, but especially to other families. . . . My wish is that the more ground evil gains in many families, the more progress goodness will make in others through your life."[2]

1) Chiara Lubich, Stirrings of Unity, (New York: New City Press, 1964) p. 52.
2) From a message of Chiara Lubich to a New Family Convention, November 9, 1972.

today by orphans, and by children from broken homes . . . . And they welcome them with unselfish love giving them the affection of a family.

We had said that families united in mutual love, would alleviate the suffering of widows and widowers. This and more has happened. Many among them have since become active in serving their communities and in so doing have found a real purpose in their lives.

The support and genuine compassion of the families of the Movement have given the strength to forgive, accept, and carry on, courageously taking upon themselves the moral and material burdens of their families, to many who have remained alone not because their spouse died, but rather because they had been betrayed, abandoned, or forced to divorce.

Many expectant mothers afraid to have their child, either because unwed or for other serious reasons have found the strength to go ahead because of the hospitality, support, and understanding of families where no one judged them. Or else they found there silent, at times, heroic models for their life.

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Sharing experiences can be both helpful and constructive. △

Florence, April 25, 1977. A conference on legal guardianship and adoption, sponsored by the New Family Movement. During this day-long meeting, fourteen couples told of their personal experiences in this area. Certain points were emphasized throughout: first, that one should not adopt a child to fill a sense of emptiness that the couple may feel, but rather offer the affection of a family to children who at times have gone through traumatizing experiences; second, that a family is able to bear the burden that a choice such as this may entail, only if it is in contact with, and supported by, other families; and third, that other children in the family, who are united to their parents in this spirit of self-giving, give a very important contribution, especially when dealing with particularly difficult problems. ▽

In general the New Families are spontaneously active in the environment where they live and work. They are involved in their schools and neighborhoods; they act as counselors, work in the poorer sections of their cities, in the slums surrounding many large urban areas, for example in Latin America and Asia. Animated and nourished by the spirituality of unity of the Focolare they are also actively involved in their parishes and dioceses, where they often hold courses for engaged and married couples, conduct CCD classes, and so on.

△
The New Families work in the slums surrounding many large urban areas, for example in Latin America.

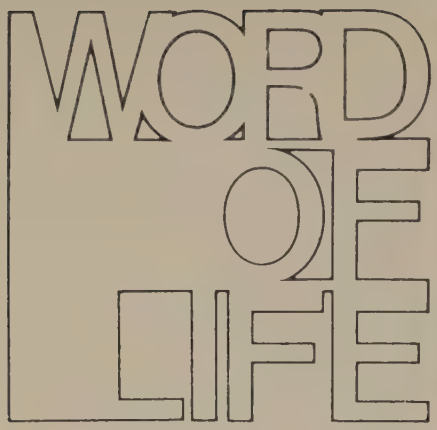
Mary is the Model

Chiara Lubich spoke about widowhood the very day the New Family Movement was founded back in 1967. "The Blessed Mother gave us an example of this," she said. "She was left a widow . . . Who filled the emptiness she felt when St. Joseph was no longer there? Jesus did. The presence of Jesus in the midst of this movement which is about to be born must be such as to fill the emptiness of these people who experience widowhood."

In Mary, who was a virgin, a fiancee, a spouse, a mother and a widow, the members of the New Family Movement see the model whom they want to imitate in whatever conditions or situations they may find themselves.

As the recent Synod of Bishops recommended, through the witness they give and by their actions, these families would like to be not only " . . . the fundamental object of the Church's evangelization, . . . but also the necessary subject. . . . "[1] ●

1) Pope John Paul II, Opening Address, Synod of Bishops, September 26, 1980.



"Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called children of God" (Mt. 5:9).

The word makes us live.

The word makes us free.

The word guarantees happiness.

The word converts.

The word purifies us.

The word draws us to our specific vocations.

The word brings forth the hatred of the world and the sanctity of the disciple.

The word makes us see the truth.

The word brings comfort.

The word gives us joy.

The word produces works.

The word gives wisdom.

The word preserves us from human concerns.

The word obtains everything.

The word brings about union with God.

The word gives us hope of eternal life.

The word makes us one.

The word changes one's mentality.

The word makes each soul a heaven.

"Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called children of God" (Mt. 5:9).

Who are the peacemakers Jesus is talking about?

They are not those who merely love peace and tranquility and cannot bear disputes. For though such people may seem naturally inclined to get along with others, frequently their secret desire is to avoid being disturbed or bothered.

Nor can we call peacemakers those good people who, trusting in God, do not react when someone provokes or insults them.

Peacemakers are those who love peace so much that they are not afraid to intervene in a conflict in order to obtain peace for those who are at odds with one another.

"Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called children of God."

Only those who possess peace can be bearers of peace.

We must, first of all, be bearers of peace in the way we behave moment by moment, living in harmony with God and in accordance with his will.

Peacemakers also attempt to create bonds of unity, to establish relationships among people, thereby reducing tensions and alleviating the state of cold war that they find in many different environments — in families, at work, or at school, in sports, among nations, etc.

You might be aware of situations like this even in your own family. Perhaps they have been going on as long as you can remember. Maybe your father does not talk to your uncle because of an argument they once had. In the same way, perhaps your grandmother refuses to speak to the lady upstairs because she always makes so much noise. Or you may know about the power struggle going on in the office where some of your friends work. Perhaps even you yourself have quarrelled with some of your friends at school. Or you may not always be on good terms with those you compete with in sports. Maybe your relationship with them is characterized by an all-out desire to be the first, to be better than the others, a desire that goes beyond a simple spirit of friendly competition.

If you live in a community, you have certainly seen how many small differences of opinion and even strong disagreements can arise and persist. The television, newspapers, and radio tell you daily that the world is like a hugh hospital and the various nations like sick people who are in dire need of peacemakers to heal the tense and difficult relationships that threaten to cause war, where it has not already broken out.

"Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called children of God."

Peace is a characteristic of all typically Christian relationships, which believers attempt to establish with everyone they live and work with, as well as those they meet only occasionally. Such relationships are based on sincere love, with no falseness or deceit, with no trace of implicit violence or rivalry competition or selfishness.

Working to establish relationships of this kind in the world brings about dramatic changes in society. In fact, the way people usually relate to one another is en-

tirely different, and unfortunately, seldom changes.

Jesus knew our human situation. That is why he asked his disciples to always take the first step in loving without waiting for the initiative or response of the other person, without expecting anything in return: "My command to you is love your enemies . . . And if you greet your brothers only, what is so praiseworthy about that?" (Mt. 5:44, 47).

"Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called children of God."

Jesus came to bring peace. Everything he said and did revealed this.

However, when this new kind of relationship is established among people, it frequently unmasks false social relationships, revealing the violence that is hidden there.

Not everyone is happy when this truth comes out and so there is a risk, in certain extreme instances, that some may react with hatred and violence towards someone who dares to disturb the existing state of affairs.

Jesus, the peacemaker, was killed by such human violence.

"Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called children of God."

". . . they shall be called children of God." In order to be called a child of God, one must become all that such a name implies. St. Paul called God ". . . the God of peace" (1 Thess. 5:23) and greeted Christians with the words, "May the God of peace be with you all." Those who are peacemakers show that they are members of God's family. They act as children of God; they give witness to God, who — as the Second Vatican Council said — has built harmony into human society, the fruit of this harmony being peace.

"Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called children of God."

How can this word of life be lived?

First of all, by spreading love in the world. The fact that the 1979 Nobel Peace Prize was awarded to Mother Teresa of Calcutta, an exceptional woman who has loved all her life, is significant.

It can be lived by intervening prudently whenever peace around us is threatened. Often it is enough to listen to the dissenting parties with love, hearing them out to the end, and a peaceful solution is found.

To relieve tensions that arise among people, a good sense of humor can also be very helpful. A rabbinical text says that the world to come belongs to those who know how to make others laugh, because they are peacemakers among those who argue.

We can build peace by working untiringly to heal the broken relationships around us. Oftentimes they became strained for very insignificant reasons.

Establishing within our company or organization special programs aimed at increasing people's awareness of the need for peace, or, supporting, as much as possible, the work of great and sincere peacemakers like Pope John Paul II and others in our country and around the world, are also ways to work for peace.

What is important is that we act, and not let our lives go by without doing something for those around us, without preparing ourselves well for the life to come.

CHIARA LUBICH

EXPERIENCES

The following are experiences that some of our readers shared with us in living the Gospel.

MAKING A CHOICE

We had a difficult time harvesting hay this summer because it rained quite frequently.

One day when the hay was in good condition to harvest, I had some mechanical difficulty and was unable to harvest. After repairing it, the next day, a mechanical failure of a different nature again stopped us. I fixed it and planned to harvest after the evening chores.

While eating supper, my wife reminded me that the word of life meeting was that night. In that moment I only wanted to harvest hay. In the next moment however, I became aware of the word of life for that month, "It is easier for a camel to pass through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of heaven." (Mt.19:24).

I realized that I was rich in my work. I began planning what I had to do so I could be finished in time for the meeting. I felt very peaceful after having made this choice.

M.B.

AN IDEA

I had the following experience while we were living the word of life ". . . one thing only is required" (Lk.10:42). This came through to me as a calling to be more concerned with people than with things. I am very caught up in getting things done and as a result, in my push to get the thing done, I frequently forget about the people involved.

Recently at work, there were several of us who met to decide on a plan for a project. I presented my idea for doing this and another man presented an idea quite different from mine. I immediately started to find fault with his, but the word of life came to mind and I stopped. I then concentrated on discussing the good points of his idea and didn't even need to mention the

negative ones. In the end, he brought those up himself and concluded that his idea was not as good as mine.

P.B.

FILING

I was working in a lab. One day, after finishing my own work, I noticed that the girls at the desk were very busy, and there was a lot of filing to be done, and so I began to do it. Two of my colleagues were in the same room. I heard them saying, "I don't think it's our responsibility to do the filing. We have worked hard enough already. During that month we were living the word of life, "So always treat others as you would like them to treat you; that is the meaning of the law and the prophets."

I understood that to treat these girls as I would like them to treat me meant not to judge them. But I continued filing.

This went on for quite awhile. Whenever I had finished my own work, I would see if there was anything else to be done.

One afternoon, one of the girls I had overheard, also began to help. It was beautiful to see how a small act of love had broken a barrier.

S.I.

RICH?

Studying for a summer at a prestigious university in the Eastern United States was for me an experience of living the word of life. Human beings there were so fragile, so vulnerable. And for some reason, real or imaginary, I felt so whole. What had impressed me so much about the commentary to the word of life for that month, was the sentence, "A person who is rich is rich for the sake of others." I had begun the summer feeling poor. So many other students seemed to have an intellectual advantage; Yale, Harvard, and Princeton were familiar territory to them. I felt cheated that all I had to look back on was a tiny junior college and another college for sisters only. I think I was angry at religious life for having made me follow what seemed like an impoverished path; maybe I was angry with God, too. This angry period was very short lived. It had the impetus to end one morning when I attended Mass. Several of the daily worshipers were from a state home for the retarded. During the Mass I had a momentary feeling of superiority. I had prepared the readings the evening before and realized that the priest was mistakenly taking the readings for the following week. After patting myself on the back for being the only one present to recognize this error, I finally listened to what the readings said: "Come to me, all you who labor and are heavy burdened." Suddenly, I saw the contrast between what I considered the "burden" of my education, and the situation of those retarded people. There was no comparison. And I realized that I had a wealth, riches to share, riches that came from recognizing that there was something — Someone, too, that I could give to whoever was with me in the present moment. I was determined to do so. During the remaining weeks of the summer, at various gatherings, there were those people I formerly would have regarded as not "neat" — not the kind of people, "with-it" people would associate with. If I happened to be with them, I tried to share my riches — not in the sense of giving them anything, but listening to who they were, appreciating them. And they were good! And I guess because I wasn't worrying about wanting to be talking with someone else or trying to think of some excuse to get away, I felt very free — also attractive, not attractive because of myself, but because the attractiveness of the Lord could shine through me.

What I then experienced was a surprising gravitation of some of those "with-it" people towards me — as if in my simplicity and quiet faith and calm I had something which they desired. I shared what I had.

I had just read the book, "When did we see you, Lord?" During that summer I met the answers. There were such good people at school: the literature teacher had such compassion for people, shared his humanity with us, had his students come to his home; the economics teacher patiently answered my questions for an hour; then gave me a squash grown in his backyard; a girl in the housing office gave me an electric typewriter for the summer because she didn't need it — and she didn't even know my name when she offered it; the lady next to me in church offered to drive me back every morning when she found I roomed near her home. The Lord was present, and he rewarded me with his hundredfold.

B.S.

MARIAPOLIS '81

FOUR MARIAPOLISES

WILL BE HELD IN NORTH AMERICA NEXT SUMMER!
YOU ARE INVITED!

SOUTHWEST: New Mexico Highlands University
Las Vegas, New Mexico
June 28th, after supper — July 4th, after breakfast

NORTHWEST: Western Washington University
Bellingham, Washington
July 12th, after supper — July 18th, after breakfast

EAST COAST: Alfred University
Alfred, New York
Aug. 2nd, after supper — Aug. 8th, after breakfast

The fourth Mariapolis will be held in Wisconsin, tentatively from **July 19th, after supper to July 25th, after breakfast.** The location of this Mariapolis will be decided shortly.

For further information about all the Mariapolises, contact the nearest Focolare Center. See addresses on page 28.

At Valamo with 'Syndesmos'

This past summer Syndesmos, the World Fellowship of Orthodox Youth, the only interorthodox body functioning regularly over the past three decades, held an International Orthodox Youth Festival and its Tenth General Assembly in Finland.

Here we see some of the representatives from the United States during the Festival. They are holding placards showing the different Patriarchates from which they come, thus expressing the unity and diversity of the Orthodox Churches in the United States.

The monastery of Valamo is situated deep in the woods, on the shore of Lake Laatokka, one of Finland's sixty thousand lakes, not far from the city of Joensuu, about 250 miles Northeast of Helsinki. This is where I spent eight beautiful days last August.

There was a meeting of three hundred people, mostly young, representatives, members, and friends of "Syndesmos," a worldwide organization which is unique in its kind. Encompassed within its body are youth organizations and theological universities of Orthodox churches and patriarchates of the whole world. Syndesmos creates a bond of unity among them.

Among the twenty or so observers who participated in the meeting, Kirsten Elkjaer and I, from the Focolare Movement, were the only Catholics.

From the very first moment, we felt at home. The Festival, the first in the history of Syndesmos, was truly beautiful. The songs and dances of the young people from Africa expressed a joyful life of faith; the participants from Finland presented a play, staged against the fabulous natural background of the lake and woods; the Greeks were absolute masters in teaching us their dances; using audiovisual means the Orthodox from the Middle East gave us a vision of our present-day history as seen through the Gospel; various groups from Russia, Australia, and France gave their contribution — all bringing to light a reality of life which, with all its variety of expressions was a unified one in its Christian content.

The Festival, which lasted six days, was followed by a four-day-long Congress. Both events centered around the general theme of "giving witness" and "service." All the talks, the work done in groups, and the presentations bore this mark of commitment. Day after day I could see the wish expressed by the Orthodox Archbishop Paul of Karelia and of all Finland, being accomplished: "May you faithfully follow the three guiding lights to unity — humility, freedom and love."

I found myself immersed in days rich in prayer, with songs in many different languages. Every day the Eucharistic liturgy, the matins and vespers were celebrated by a different Orthodox Church. These splendid liturgies created an atmosphere of recollection, which made it easy for us to share our experiences of Christian life.

Kirsten Elkjaer and I had been asked to give a presentation about the Focolare Movement and the ecumenical activities of Chiara Lubich. It was of special interest for them to hear about the practice of the movement to choose a sentence from the Scriptures each month (the word of life), and put it into practice.

As the days passed, the rapport among all acquired more and more spontaneity and depth.

Eleven study groups were set up to examine the various aspects of Orthodoxy, and its relevance in coping with the problems of our times. The topics included: "Mission and Justice; Violence,

War, Death; Science, Technology and Christian Responsibility; The Role of Youth in the Church."[1] The youth showed a strong commitment in their search for a better understanding of their faith and in their desire of putting the Gospel into practice, keenly aware as they were of their very rich Christian heritage.

Bishop John of Charlotte in the United States, who represented Demetrius I, the Ecumenical Patriarch of Constantinople, said that this commitment can become a reality if it is based on a Christ-centered life, and if "giving witness" and "giving service" become the characteristic life-style of each person.

The response to this challenge to concretely live the Gospel brought about many important events during this conference. A young man from Finland expressed the thoughts of many, when he invited all present to emulate the late Patriarch Athenagoras in his dauntless courage and in his prophetic vision, and proposed to admit into the Syndesmos all organizations of the Monophysitic or anti-Chalcedonian Churches, such as the Coptic Church of Egypt and the Syro-Orthodox Church of India. The proposal was accepted and the assembly unanimously amended the Constitution of Syndesmos allowing this to be possible.

The Orthodox monastery of Valamo provided the perfect setting for the Festival and General Assembly of Syndesmos held from August 1st to the 10th last summer. Among those attending were the Orthodox Archbishop Cyril of Vyborg (USSR), the Roman Catholic Bishop of Finland, Paul Verschuren, and the Lutheran Bishop of Hannover, Germany, Hans Gernot Jung.

Another remarkable aspect of this meeting of young people from almost all Orthodox Churches of the world, was their strong desire for unity, not only among their own churches, but among their and all other Christian churches as well.

Prompted by this desire, they compiled a motion asking: "with the boldness prompted by our joyful experiences together at Valamo, that the authorities of our Orthodox Churches and those of the Oriental Orthodox Churches proceed with all haste possible to heal another wound in the Body of Christ, thus further fulfilling his mandate 'That all may be one.' "[2]

The motion was approved by prolonged applause. Another request which was accepted most eagerly was the one addressed to all Synods of the Patriarchates and to the autocephalous churches to work toward a solution to the unclear situation of the local churches situated outside their country of origin,

It is not easy to adequately describe the vitality and the impact of a meeting such as this. In an interview published in the American paper "Orthodox Observer" of September 24, 1980, James Couchell, outgoing President of Syndesmos was asked "Did the Festival fulfill your expectations?" "Yes indeed" was the president's reply. "More than 300 people participated, and they came from 29 nations. The largest delegation, not counting the Finns, was that from Greece, with 47 persons. These statistics of course cannot describe the non-tangible ways in which the Festival surpassed our expectations. That had to be experienced or seen on the faces of the participants." ●

From left to right we see Kirsten Elkjaer and Joan Back from the Focolare Movement, James Couchell, outgoing President of Syndesmos, and Mr. Mackram Mehanyi from the Coptic organization, The Association of Christian University Students, which was the first organization of the Oriental Orthodox Churches to become a member of Syndesmos during this convention.

1) Challenge, Orthodox Observer, September 24, 1980.
2) Ibid.

SENIOR YEAR

by James Boselli

CAST OF CHARACTERS:
Mr. Boman, Miss Olsen, Mrs. Raymond, Anthony, Donald, George, Joan, Michael and Anthony's mother, Mrs. Coogan.

The action takes place in a large city high school and in Mr. Boman's home.

SCENE I: Classroom 12-40

(Mr. Boman is seated at his desk in an empty classroom. His young face is clouded by an air of worry as he looks through his papers. His clothes are casual but neat. From outside in the corridor shouts and running steps can be heard as the students change classes. Mr. Boman gets up from his desk to turn on the lights in the classroom as the first seniors begin to dribble in for his Advanced Math class. The gray November weather does not seem to dampen the spirits of the students. As the bell rings for the lesson to begin, the classroom fills up almost instantaneously.)

MR. BOMAN: The first thing I would like to do this morning is to go over the assignment you received a couple of days ago. We can begin with you, Donald; could you please go through the first two problems, explaining how you arrived at your conclusion?

(Donald remains seated in silence.)

MR. BOMAN: Excuse me, perhaps you didn't understand that I meant you, Donald, in the third seat, first row.

(Donald looks down and remains silent. His book lies un-opened on his desk.)

MR. BOMAN: Look, Donald, maybe you did better on the other assignment I gave you yesterday. I'll get back to you later. George, could you take the problems I mentioned.

GEORGE *(opens his notebook and begins reading with precision and certainty)*: Factor and find the solution for x in the following problem $-36 = x^2 - 9x$. First I set the whole equation to zero by subtracting 36 from both sides. This gave me $0 = x^2 - 9x + 36$. Then I factored this equation into $0 = (x - 12)(x + 3)$. Since the solution of this equation is zero, I realized that either $(x - 12)$ was equal to zero or $(x + 3)$ was equal to zero. So I put each equation equal to zero and I came out with $x - 12 = 0$, $x = 12$, $x + 3 = 0$, $x = -3$. Two possible solutions for them are: $(12, -3)$.

MR. BOMAN: Excellent, George, you really know Math well. But now, could you please do me a favor and leave the class for the rest of the period.

GEORGE *(mouth opened wide with suprise)*: But, why?

MR. BOMAN: I'll explain to you later.

(George leaves the classroom shaking his head in disbelief. The other students look at one another with raised eyebrows and begin to murmur to one another.)

MR. BOMAN: We'll discuss this later. Now let's go ahead with the lesson.

(The bell rings to end the first period. The students go out for a break and Mr. Boman remains at his desk.)

ANTHONY *(walking past Mr. Boman's desk and talking to a fellow student)*: What a weirdo this new Math teacher. He praises the guy who doesn't answer and sends the one out of the class who gets an "A".

BOB *(laughing)*: Must be the new teaching methods they're teaching them in college these days.

(Mr. Boman doesn't raise his head but it's obvious that he overheard their conversation. He is left alone in the classroom, working.)

SCENE II: The same room, five minutes later.

(All the students return to their desks including George who looks inquisitively at Mr. Boman. Mr. Boman raises himself and sits on the desk, hands clasped on his knees.)

MR. BOMAN *(looking at the students right in their eyes)*: I know you've spent this five minute break discussing the incident which occurred during the first period and, as I promised, you're going to get an explanation.

(A murmur of satisfaction goes through the entire classroom.)

MR. BOMAN: I really cannot figure out how two guys who sit next to each other every day and probably get together outside as well, can get such different grades. I could explain it if Donald were stupid, but he's not. He only needs someone to give him a hand. *(Donald looks up for the first time.)* If I were you, George, I'd be ashamed of the "A" you got this morning. You're selfish. What's going to happen in the future with someone like you who knows all the theories perfectly and doesn't care one bit about the people around him? That's why I sent you out before. I'm more interested in you all doing well in Math than having one person who's a brain.

(You can hear a pin drop in the classroom. George and Donald look at each other a little surprised. Anthony from the last seat, makes a gesture as if to say that the teacher is crazy and the whole class starts to laugh. Mr. Boman stands up and continues the lesson.)

SCENE III: The Faculty Room, two weeks later

(There are a few well-used leather armchairs scattered here and there around the room. The ashtray on the large round table is overflowing with cigarette butts. On an end table in the corner there is a large coffee percolator. The red light is on. Next to it there is a stack of sterifoam cups and some plastic spoons. Mr. Boman is seated in one of the armchairs deeply sunk in his thoughts, looking out the window. Miss Olsen comes in.)

MISS OLSEN *(filling two cups of coffee)*: You certainly worry a lot about those kids. Rumors are going around about you, you know!

MR. BOMAN *(sipping his coffee)*: Like what?

MISS OLSEN *(sitting down in the armchair opposite Mr. Boman)*: Oh, you know, that this new teacher has strange methods. I'm sure it's not true, but I heard that in order to find out if one student has studied, you ask one of the others.

MR. BOMAN *(smiling)*: It's true.

MISS OLSEN: But what are you trying to get at? I never heard of such a thing!

MR. BOMAN: Well, first of all, the majority of them really don't have the faintest idea what Math and Physics are all about. They don't seem to have any foundation for these subjects.

MISS OLSEN: That may be true but you can't solve that by asking George if John, for example, has studied.

MR. BOMAN: No, of course not. But there's another factor. The class is made up of a bunch of small cliques. Those who have known one another longer form a closed group. To defend themselves, the others form other groups. They are like small planets, each one on its own orbit, that never meet. They sabotage every attempt I make to help them become aware of one another as human beings.

MISS OLSEN: How do they react to your "method?"

MR. BOMAN: I think it takes them off their guard most of the time. John said to me the other day, "But, Mr. Boman, the other teachers just explain the subject matter to us and then they go home. Why don't you do the same?"

MISS OLSEN: That's exactly my question. Why don't you?

MR. BOMAN *(gets up and goes over to the window)*: I guess I would feel like a traitor. I'd be betraying myself and them. And I have a feeling that they're beginning to realize that my efforts are not just aimed at obtaining discipline. I'm not doing it for myself, but to give them something that could help them in life.

MISS OLSEN: I don't get it. What do you mean?

MR. BOMAN *(turning and looking again at Miss Olsen)*: I mean an awareness of the fact that there is another dimension to life, that until we open our eyes to those around us and start living with and for them, we are only half human beings — if that!

(The bell rings for changing classes.)

MISS OLSEN *(getting up)*: Well, yes, I have to run to my next class now but I'd like to hear more about your "methods" another time.

(Miss Olsen picks up her books and walks hurriedly out. Mr. Boman throws away the empty coffe cups, puts his papers in his briefcase and walks out of the room.)

SCENE IV: Classroom 12-40

(A few months have passed. It's the first day of school after semester break. As the students come in, there are murmurs of dissatisfaction and many throw looks of scorn in the direction of Mr. Boman who is seated at his desk waiting for everyone to come in. The bell rings and the last students take their seats.)

MR. BOMAN *(getting up and going around to sit on his desk)*: I guess you'd like to know why the grades were all so low.

ANTHONY *(from the last seat)*: We already know why — you hate us and this is your way to get at us.

MR. BOMAN *(looking intentively at Anthony)*: If you like, I'll explain. It's not because I have anything against you. Perhaps I can tell each one of you what I think the reason is for the difficulties.

(There is an almost unanimous "Yea!" and all become much more attentive.)

MR. BOMAN: OK, Joan, for example, you don't seem to understand the subject matter, but it's not because you're not capable. There's something which stops you — you're shy. Isn't it true?

(Joan blushes and nods.)

MR. BOMAN: You feel that the others don't understand you so you get scared. That way you give only about a tenth of what you're actually capable.

(Joan continues to blush but smiles at the same time.)

MR. BOMAN: Instead, John, you seem to just like to fool around all the time, but actually you're a good kid and also pretty intelligent. Have you ever tried letting go of this mask of yours and being yourself?

(John turns and whispers something to the boy next to him, who begins to laugh.)

MR. BOMAN: Just think about it John. It's only an idea.

(The bell rings for the break but no one moves.)

MR. BOMAN: Now I want to ask you something. Tell me what I can do to help you improve your grades. There are certainly things that I could be doing differently.

(There's a moment of silence before someone dares to answer.)

GEORGE: You go too fast sometimes. You don't wait to see if we all got it. Donald just shakes his head when you go on to another equation, so he just gives up.

MR. BOMAN: Thanks, just call out, but I'll try to remember too.

JOHN: It would be better if you gave us shorter assignments but due the following day. Otherwise we put off doing them until the last evening and then, if too many days have gone by we can't remember the explanation.

ANTHONY *(in a stage whisper to the boy next to him)*: Maybe Mr. Bow-Wow could just stay home for the rest of the semester and then we can decide our grades for one another.

(There is a ripple of laughter in the classroom.)

MR. BOMAN *(half-smiling)*: Thank you, Anthony, I'll have to think about your suggestion, though. I might run the risk of getting fired and teaching jobs aren't that easy to come by nowadays.

(Anthony looks out the window)

MR. BOMAN: If you have other suggestions let me know outside of class or else tomorrow.

(Everyone gets up and exits quickly, talking and laughing.)

SCENE V: The Faculty Room

(A few weeks have gone by. It's after lunch and the Faculty Room is crowded and smoke-filled. Miss Olsen comes in, looks around and seeing Mr. Boman speaking to another teacher, goes directly over to him.)

MISS OLSEN: Excuse me, I just met Donald in the hall, beaming. He told me he got a "B+" on his last Math test. The other guys seemed just as proud of him as he was of himself. They were all telling me how interesting Math and Physics have become and especially how they've discovered a new way of studying.

MRS.RAYMOND *(another teacher in the group)*: That's right. In my English Lit class a discussion arose about study habits and Joan, who normally is so shy, stood up and tried to explain "Mr. Boman's method." The only thing I got out of what she was saying was that Math and Physics have become easier and more interesting because there's less competition and more interest in one another.

MR. BOMAN *(smiling)*: I have to admit, it's good to hear. I've been noting a difference in their grades and especially in the way the lessons go, but they seldom say anything directly to me.

MISS OLSEN: I've got to get at what's driving you. In less than one school year you've succeeded in revitalizing a whole class. Now I want to know the truth.

MR. BOMAN *(laughing)*: My game is up, huh? It's really very simple. My conviction is that God has created us to live in a different way than what we usually do. Our personal fulfillment and happiness can be achieved only in this dimension. And as a result our relationships with those around us change also. The discovery that I would like each one of them to make is that God loves them in a personal way.

MRS. RAYMOND *(raising her eyebrows)*: Do you talk to them about God?

MR. BOMAN: No, I haven't yet, but if they ask me as you have now, I won't be afraid to answer them.

MISS OLSEN: So your entire class has been transformed?

MR. BOMAN: Oh no! It's true that many of them help one another spontaneously now and they seem to have gained more self-confidence, even outside the class they tell me. But there's always the exception. Anthony, for example, never changes. Always in the last seat, always with the same sarcastic smile, always looking for the chance to show me that he hasn't been "taken in" by my "system." Just this morning I was forced to send him out because he lit up a cigarette in the middle of the lesson. He just walked out with a triumphant air. And yet I know he could really do better, but I haven't found the way to help him yet.

MRS. RAYMOND *(turning to prepare to leave)*: You can just as well give up on that one. Also considering the situation in his family.

(Mr. Boman looks after her with a question mark on his face and then turns back to Miss Olsen.)

MISS OLSEN: She's right. Anthony has been a problem ever since he started here. No one has been able to do anything to help him and I strongly doubt he wants help. He's most probably not going to graduate with his class and that doesn't help matters. I guess Anthony could be the real testing ground for your theory, Robert. Deep down, I'd almost like to see you succeed.

MR. BOMAN: For his sake, not for mine, I hope so too.

(Mr. Boman and Miss Olsen exit together.)

I'm Mrs. Coogan, Anthony's mother. Anthony has told me about you. You have to help me!

SCENE VI: Classroom 12-40

(It's the end of May and the lessons are more relaxed as graduation approaches. An avid class discussion arises centering on a general evaluation of the school year.)

MR. BOMAN: One question, though. Does anyone know where Anthony has been for the past few days? Is he sick?

(The students look at one another, waiting for someone to be the first to speak.)

JOAN: Mr. Boman, maybe you don't know, but when somebody knows for sure that he's gonna flunk, he figures it doesn't make sense to come to classes towards the end of the year. It's not the first time Anthony disappears like this. He's a funny guy.

MR. BOMAN: Yes, I know. I'm always sorry when someone fails, but in his case time will tell. Maybe next year it'll go better. However, I'm certain it must be hard on him not to graduate with his class.

JOHN: It's hard to tell with Anthony, though. He doesn't seem to care, but I really think it's just a big front.

MR. BOMAN: You should know, right, John?

JOHN *(laughing)*: Yes, I guess I should.

MR. BOMAN: We can finish early today. That's all if no one has a question.

(No one answers directly, but the classroom is empty in just a few seconds. Mr. Boman remains seated for a moment before leaving the room.)

SCENE VII: Mr. Boman's apartment

(The room is furnished simply. A couch and one armchair, a dining area next to the kitchen. A desk is located on one corner with two large bookcases on either side. Mr. Boman is seated at the desk, correcting papers. The radio is on softly. The doorbell rings. Mr. Boman gets up and goes over to open the door.)

MR. BOMAN *(with surprise)*: Why Anthony! Come in!

(Anthony rushes by Mr. Boman. He's very agitated.)

MR. BOMAN: Sit down. Do you want a cup of coffee?

ANTHONY: No thank you, on both counts. *(pacing up and down)* The others told me that you were talking about me yesterday in class. That you said that you don't care a bit about what happens to me.

(Mr. Boman sits down on the couch and listens attentively as Anthony continues, almost screaming.)

ANTHONY: I would have expected something like that from the other teachers, but not from you. I thought that you had understood me, but I guess I was just fooling myself. It's true that it's better never to trust anyone. *(lowering his voice)* All teachers are no good. That's what I came to tell you. To thank you for convincing me that the world is rotten.

MR. BOMAN: What they told you is not true. Maybe they misunderstood what I meant. I do care about what happens to you. What I said was, what didn't go well this year, perhaps will go better next year. I'm really glad you came, though. I've been wanting to talk to you.

(Anthony stops pacing and sinks down in the armchair.)

ANTHONY: I didn't mean what I just said. I came here hoping that you would say what you just said.

MR. BOMAN: What's bugging you, Anthony?

ANTHONY: I can't take it anymore, Mr. Boman. Ever since I was a kid, my father has been reminding me that it costs him $500 a year to send me to school and all I do is waste time.

MR. BOMAN: May I ask — is your family in financial difficulties in some way?

ANTHONY: Not really. But my father only sees money. He's one of those men who pulled himself up out of nothing and ended up thinking that his role as husband and father is to buy a car, the latest appliances for Mom, a house at the shore and then remind us daily how much he's done for us, how grateful we should be and so on, ad infinitum — like some of your equations, Mr. Boman. *(laughing bitterly)*

MR. BOMAN: Your father seems to use the same system at home that he meets out in the working world. . . . Do you have any friends?

ANTHONY *(looking down at the floor)*: No real ones. I never had. Once in a while I got close to someone and told them about my problems. Sometimes they went so far as to say, "Poor guy!" But then one by one they just dropped away. I go for long rides on my motorcycle when I can't take it anymore, but that's a pretty poor solution.

MR. BOMAN: I agree with you. As I said before, I'm really glad you came. I think we can work something out together. I'm not going to sit here and tell you, "Poor guy!" You're not. You've got every possibility in the world to make it, if you put your mind to it. All I can tell you is that my door is always open, whenever you need to talk or if you think I can do something for you.

ANTHONY *(getting up from the chair)*: You know, I feel a little better just having told you. I will be back, but now I've got to go. If it gets too late I hear about it for two hours straight when I get home.

(Anthony goes quickly to the door. Putting his hand on the door knob, he hesitates. Mr. Boman stands up.)

ANTHONY *(without turning around)*: See you tomorrow in school.

MR. BOMAN: Fine, see you then.

(Anthony exits quickly. Mr. Boman goes over to the window and watches for a moment, returning then to his desk.)

SCENE VIII: School corridor

(Mr. Boman enters through the main door and starts going directly towards the Faculty Room. He is stopped by the principal's secretary.)

SECRETARY: Excuse me, Mr. Boman. There's someone here in the office who would like to speak with you.

(Mr. Boman enters the principal's office. He sees a middle-aged woman sitting in a chair. Her eyes are red and swollen from crying. Upon seeing Mr. Boman, she gets up and goes over to him nervously.)

MRS. COOGAN *(putting out her hand)*: How do you do, Mr. Boman. I'm Mrs. Coogan, Anthony's mother. Anthony has told me about you. *(bursts into tears)* You have to help me. My son hasn't been to school for six days. He just goes out all day. Who knows what he's doing?

(Mr. Boman and Mrs. Coogan sit down.)

MRS. COOGAN: He only comes home to grab a bite to eat. I can't get him to say a word. He's always been different, but now, now it's really a disaster! I really don't know what to do anymore. It's not just for school that I'm worried, but for the family. If you only knew his father! *(starts sobbing again)* It's like hell at our home. *(puts hands over her face and continues to cry.)*

MR. BOMAN: To begin with, Mrs. Coogan, Anthony is in school today. He came to see me last evening and we talked things over. I think we'll be able to find a solution.

MRS. COOGAN *(looking up)*: Our family is not a real one. My husband has always been a tyrant. As long as he took it out on me, it was alright. I've resigned myself — even though I wouldn't wish this life on a dog. But when he starts with the kids, I see that they can't take it. You see how Anthony is. And my little girl — I'm afraid — she's already started to answer her father back. I don't want her to end up like her brother, but I don't see how to avoid it *(starts sobbing again, again, but seems a bit calmer)* Mr. Boman, I entrust my son to you.

MR. BOMAN: I promise that I'll do what I can.

(Mrs. Coogan gets up, they shake hands and she goes out, drying her eyes, trying to regain her composure. Mr. Boman accompanies her to the door, picks up his briefcase and exits after her.)

SCENE IX: Mr. Boman's apartment

(A sharp knock is heard at the door. Mr. Boman comes quickly out of the kitchen to answer. Anthony comes storming into the room. His face is red from running and his eyes are blazing.)

ANTHONY *(trying to catch his breath)*: It's all over! This time it's really over! I've decided to get out of here. I'm going out to California to try my luck there. At least I'll be far away from my father, at least I won't hear that I'm the one who "costs $500!" I heard today that the teachers at school were discussing my case. They've decided that I'm hopeless so they're going to make life impossible for me next year. Just what I needed, right! *(pacing up and down)* My father wasn't enough. The only thing left for me to do is to get out. *(throws himself down in the chair)* And besides, I can't face the fact of going back to the same school. I'm ashamed to meet the other students.

(Mr. Boman goes out to the kitchen and comes back with two glasses of soda. He puts one on the end table next to Anthony and then sits down on the couch, slowly sip-

ping his drink. They sit in silence for a moment.)

ANTHONY: This time I really mean it. I just came to tell you.

MR. BOMAN: Can I ask you something?

ANTHONY: Don't try to get me to change my mind.

MR. BOMAN: Just one question — don't you think you're running away from reality instead of facing it and trying to find a solution?

(Anthony doesn't answer but he changes his position to indicate that he's listening.)

MR. BOMAN: If you want to try, you'll always have a friend — me. If you want, I can speak to the other teachers. I think they'll listen to me. I'd advise you to try to find a job this summer. . . .

ANTHONY: Doing what?

MR. BOMAN: I have a friend who has a bookstore. He asked me if I knew someone who wanted a summer job. If you want I can give you the address. Just tell him you're the young man I told him about.

ANTHONY: You already told him I'd be coming?

MR. BOMAN: Well, not absolutely for sure, but . . . you know, Anthony, I think that if we do this together, it'll work out. Maybe your father's problem is that he's always gone ahead on his own, all alone.

ANTHONY: I can't have too much pity on him right now. . .but. . . who knows. . .what was that address?

MR. BOMAN: I have it right here. *(takes a slip of paper out of his pocket and hands it to Anthony.)*

ANTHONY *(getting up):* Are you going to be in town during the summer?

MR. BOMAN: Most of it. I'll let you know as soon as I know my definite plans. Maybe we can even go somewhere together with a few other guys, for a week-end perhaps.

ANTHONY: That sounds great... Listen...thanks...I mean...I want to try.

(He shakes hands with Mr. Boman and goes out. Mr. Boman remains alone in the room. He goes over, picks up the empty glasses and exits into the kitchen.)

(CURTAIN)

Images FOR words

"everything that god wills or permits is for our sanctification."

Saint Catherine of Siena

The young and the Gospel

One day in school I was having a conversation with some of my friends about a test the next day.

One girl said, "I'm really going to study hard and try to get an "A" on the Social Studies test. Anyway, I know I'm going to get an "A". After she said that I got pretty mad at her because I knew that she was just showing off. I decided that I would study real hard and try to get an "A" to show her that she wasn't the only smart one.

That night when I was studying for the test I suddenly remembered the Word of Life, "Be careful not to do your acts of righteousness before men, to be seen by them. If you do, you will have no reward from your father in Heaven."

I thought about it for a while when I suddenly realized what it all meant! I wasn't supposed to do something great, nice, good, thoughtful, etc. just to get praise and appreciation from other people or to be admired, or even to look good to them, but to do it for God, only for God.

So I started studying with a new feeling in my heart. It was a happy and joyous feeling, because I was studying for God alone.

The next day after the test, I thought for a moment how easy the questions were. I knew I had done well on the test and I knew it was because I had studied for God.

Marijo

One Saturday, I was doing the laundry and when the clothes were washed and dried, it was time to fold them and to put them away. I called my sisters to come and help me but they were busy with other things. I wasn't going to start folding and sorting out the clothes until they came to help me because it's our job every week. But then I remembered that I had to love Jesus in them and not to think of myself, so I started folding. When I finished two batches of clothes, I got the "old man" and I felt like announcing to them that I had finished, so that I could get their praise. But then I converted right away because I remembered the word of life for the month, which was: "Be careful not to do your acts of righteousness before men. . ." In the end I got the hundredfold because when the third batch of clothes came, my sisters started helping me fold and sort out all the clothes.

Susan

My friend at school usually teases me and swears. One day I wanted to really love her, so when she started teasing me, I let her, I laughed and went along with her. I think she noticed and could feel that love.

After a while she stopped teasing me and I thought maybe I could give her the word of life, so I did. She read it a few times and I think she understood it. Then a week passed and she didn't swear anymore. She didn't tease any of the kids. I could tell she was trying to love.

Laura

A few days ago my brother, sister and I were in line to give our father our hangers, (we were hanging out the laundry.) Each time we got to the front of the line and I wanted to give all my hangers in. But I thought, "Do you want to live like Jesus? Yes. Would Jesus do this? No. Then go to the end of the line." So I did. I did this to love Jesus in my brother and sister.

Mike.

One day my sister and I got into an argument. I started thinking of all the arguments we had and I became sad.

After a while I realized that I was not seeing her with new eyes and that I was thinking of her negative side, instead of loving her as Jesus said we should.

So I just shut off all that was in the past and thought of the good things she did. Then, we both said we were sorry and started again to live mutual love.

Marimel

MUSIC

THE PROMPTER IS A LADY

A good part of her work is done in a cubbyhole no larger than two by three feet,with a chair, a music stand, a small TV monitor, and a telephone. She must climb in, practically twisting herself onto the chair, and spends anywhere from two and a half to over four hours in a cramped position and the most intense concentration. The cubbyhole is the prompter's box at the Metropolitan Opera, and sitting inside is Joan Dornemann, the first and only prompter at the Met and perhaps in the world who is a woman. Every time the heavy Met curtain comes down at the end of each act, a big cloud of dust descends upon her head, and so do all the other stage paraphernalia such as snow, hail, or ashes as the action may demand. And yet, when we asked her how she could endure and indeed survive all this hardship, all she had to say was "Oh, yes, it isn't too comfortable physically," but added, with deep conviction, "But since this is where I can be closest to the singers, where I can really help them in moments of trouble, this is where I want to be. For me this is the best, the most desirable place in the whole house!"

Prompting, for Joan Dornemann, is actually the logical follow-up of her work as a coach and assistant conductor. She is an accomplished musician and when she is in charge of the musical preparation of an opera, she coaches each singer individually, helps them prepare their roles both musically and dramatically, watches them during rehearsals, comments, gives a few hints on one point or another — and she does the same thing, and with the same care, for the understudies, who must be ready to fill in whenever one of the principal singers is unable to perform. Then, when the time comes for the performance on stage, Joan is there with them every minute, to the very end. She really loves them, and therefore does everything she can.

Her concentration is so complete, that she takes in everything that happens on stage, all at the same time. In addition to watching every move of the singers, she watches the conductor on the small TV set, and when anything threatens to go wrong, she picks up the phone to summon help. Once, when a mezzo soprano split her costume up the back in hitting a high note, Joan called the costume department, who immediately rushed to the rescue with safety pins, ready to fix the damage as soon as the singer could leave the stage.

"Nobody, who hasn't lived close to the artists knows the agonies they go through night after night, the terror of a small indisposition, an accident with a prop or costume, the joy and relief of a well placed note or a well-finished aria."

Joan Dornemann really makes herself one with the singer, being sad when his role requires him to be sad, or joyous, or terrified — it's all expressed on Joan's face. She acts out each role with her face, but she also counts the bars, gives clues — just at the right moment, a little bit ahead of the singer, and she also gives them moral support. When she senses a moment of panic, she nods to let the singer know that she knows she is needed, and that she won't abandon him. And she nods and smiles happily when all goes well.

Joan Dornemann, who is young and attractive, was born in the Italian section of Boston, but did not speak Italian until she went to Florence to study at the conservatory. She took lessons in piano and harpsichord, and was on her way to a concert career when she decided that concertizing was much too lonely a life for her and chose opera instead. Her first job was at the City Opera in New York, but fate soon took her to the Teatro Liceo in Barcelone, where she worked, among others, with the famous Spanish soprano Montserrat Caballe. It was Miss Caballe who told her one day: "We need a prompter, why don't you do it?" "But I don't know how!" was Joan's worried reply. "Well, learn it!" said Miss Caballe. And so Joan learned.

On her return to New York, Joan had an audition with Maestro James Levine, musical director of the Metropolitan Opera. The audition lasted over three hours, but she was accepted at the Met where she's been ever since. Her repertory is strictly Italian, and sometimes French, opera. Even so, she has an extremely busy schedule, with no less than five operas during last season alone. Perhaps the most interesting among these was the new, five act edition of Verdi's *Don Carlo*..With the newly "excavated" first act lasting one hour and fifty minutes, this already long Verdi opera can compete with any Wagner creation for sheer duration!

With all her loving care for the great artist — and there is a whole roster from Luciano Pavarotti to Sherrill Milnes, from Renata Scotto to Marily Horne, to Jose Carreras and many more who acknowledge their deep debt of gratitude — Joan Dornemann is most concerned with the still struggling young artists of tomorrow.

Because of this concern she's actively involved with the yearly Young Artists' Auditions at the Metropolitan, where she personally takes care of each individual participant in his or her preparation for the contest. "The future of our young singers is very close to my heart," she confided to us, "I really want to devote myself to them. You know, we don't have as many small theaters or as many competitions as you have in Italy or in Europe. And studying music in the United States is much more expensive. So these Met auditions are very important for them. It is one of the very few opportunities for them to be heard, and, even more, to win scholarships toward their artistic development.

"When they reach New York, each contestant is already prepared and each has already been

chosen in his or her own regional competition. Yet, their preparedness is far from being on the same level. A girl coming from Blackfoot, Iowa, for instance, may have the most beautiful voice, but since it is doubtful that she had a really good teacher, her diction, her bearing, her gestures, even her grooming will lack the sophistication we may expect from a girl straight from a music school in New York. So I try my best to establish a certain balance. I might tell one to go on a diet, another to change her hairdo, or I work on pronunciation — all this in addition to studying the arias each of them is going to present on stage before the public." And once on stage, Joan is again with them to the very end, only that it's not from the prompter's box, but at the piano, accompanying them, easing their tension, sharing each moment of anxiety and of triumph.

When we told her how wonderful it must be to be so helpful both to the great and to the small, she said, "They give me so much joy, that I really don't know who is helping whom the most. I rather feel that it is I who should be grateful, because I always feel on the receiving end."

Vera Giannini

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Focolare posters

NEW! NEW! NEW!

A new color poster (15" x 18") is now available at all the Focolare Centers. The other four posters (also 15" x 18") can still be obtained as well. All can be ordered by mail from:
Focolare Movement, P.O. Box 496,
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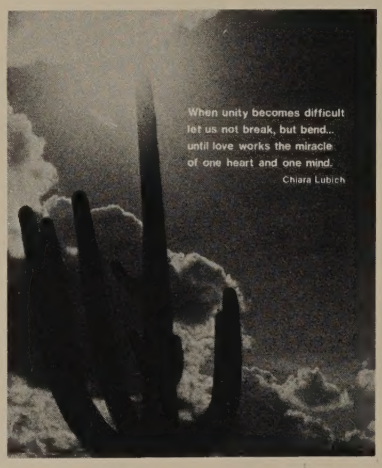
When unity becomes difficult
let us not break, but bend...
until love works the miracle
of one heart and one mind.
Chiara Lubich

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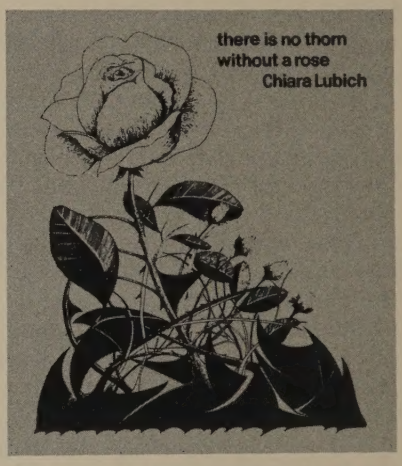

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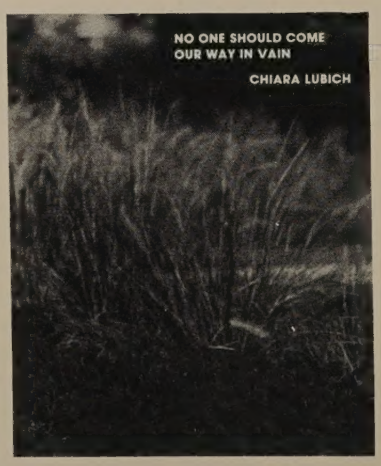

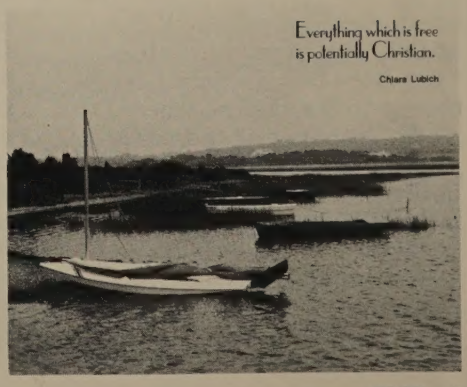

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FIRST CLASS: **Delivery time: approximately 1 week**

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What is the Focolare Movement?

THE BEGINNINGS

The Focolare Movement began in 1943, in Italy. Chiara Lubich, with a small group of girls, realized in the midst of the total destruction of World War II, that God is the only one worth living for. Hence they began to place the Gospel in the center of their lives. The testament of Jesus became their Ideal: "That all may be one . . . that the world may know that you have sent me, and that you have loved them as you have loved me . . . " (Jn.17: 23). The life lived by these first girls, the spiritual way they spontaneously followed, gave rise to a form of spirituality proper to the Focolare Movement. It represents a powerful means of introducing the Gospel into modern life.

WHO ARE THE FOCOLARINI

The name "Focolarini" takes its origin from the Italian word "fire" and suggests the idea of "carriers of fire."

Single men and women live in separate communities called Focolare Centers. Their principal aim is to achieve unity among themselves through mutual charity practiced twenty-four hours a day. They follow the evangelical counsels of poverty, chastity, and obedience. They work as other lay men and women in regular jobs and professions.

Some married persons, even though continuing to live in their families, participate fully in the life of either the men's or women's Focolare Centers in their common effort to achieve this same unity. They are called "Married Focolarini."

THE VOLUNTEERS

The Volunteers, who are also called the "Volunteers of God," would like to transform all human realities according to the Gospel spirit. For this reason they remain in their jobs and in their professions in order to vivify them with this spirit.

Their aim is to help form a society made of men and women who are made "new" by the Gospel message and who can then bring new life to all fields of human activity (education, business, etc.). This results in new social relationships which, in turn, lead to the realization of new structures of society.

THE LARGEST MEMBERSHIP

The largest membership of the Movement is made up of men, women, and young people of all social conditions who are free of any formal ties with it. Their bond of unity stems from their free and willing acceptance of its spirit. They keep in touch with the Movement and with one another through large or small gatherings, publications, correspondence, and personal contact.

People with other commitments, even those bound to religious institutions, can form part of the Movement too because the Movement exists wherever its spirit is lived. People of non-Christian religions are also counted among the Movement's friends. Also those who owe no allegiance to any faith are often attracted by one or another of the Movement's aspects.

GEN

The new generations of the Focolare Movement form another Movement or, better, three movements: the Gen 2, the Gen 3 and the Gen 4 Movements, divided according to their various age groups. "Gen" stands for new generation.

Thousands of young people all over the world have been attracted by the spirituality of unity. Their number continues to grow.

At the core of this large group of youth, are Gen who have committed themselves to living the Gospel message of love. The Gen use all possible means to share with other youth the conviction they have that the Gospel is the answer to every question and the motive for everything they do.

THE MAIN TALKS OF THE 1980 MARIAPOLIS

Chiara Lubich

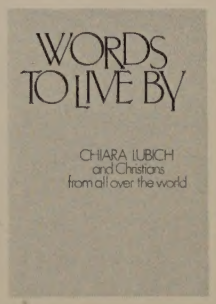
WHEN OUR LOVE IS CHARITY

At the beginning of 1980 John Paul II addressed the following words to some members of the Focolare Movement.

"Charity, love comes first of all from God and returns to him, 'God is Love,' says St. John. . . . and also, 'How can anyone who does not love his brother, whom he has seen, love God, whom he has not seen?' (1Jn. 4:20).

"The Christian vocation, and particularly the spirituality of the Focolare Movement, demands that this truth concerning God and man be put into practice. I encourage you to go deeply into it and live it. . . ."

The Focolare Movement is — as its foundress Chiara Lubich states — a concrete experience of Charity. In this book she speaks about this experience.



WORDS TO LIVE BY

Chiara Lubich and Christians from all over the world.

Chiara Lubich is one of those people who have taken the Gospel seriously, discovered the life that is in it, and wished to share it with others. This is the reason why, for over thirty years, the members of the Focolare Movement have chosen a sentence of the Gospel each month and, day after day, have tried to put it into practice.

Now, millions of copies of the "Word of Life" and its commentary are distributed each month and it is lived throughout the whole world, for the Word of God is dynamic and communicative by its very nature. When it is lived, it changes people and transforms the universe.

This is what this book would like to show. It has been written during the course of a whole year. It is drawn straight from life.

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